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TO RUEHEE/ARAB LEAGUE COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
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RUCNISL/ISLAMIC COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
INFO RUEHCP/AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN PRIORITY 0145
RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD PRIORITY 1998
RUEHJA/AMEMBASSY JAKARTA PRIORITY 0026
RUEHBUL/AMEMBASSY KABUL PRIORITY 0076

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 JEDDAH 000084

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RIYADH PLEASE PASS TO DHAHRAN, DEPARTMENT FOR NEA/ARP AND
EUR

E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/18/2018
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KISL](#) [KIRF](#) [DA](#) [NL](#) [SA](#)
SUBJECT: OIC SLAMS DANISH CARTOON...

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SUBJECT: OIC SLAMS DANISH CARTOONS; WARNS OF CONFLICT;
CALLS FOR PEACEFUL PROTEST
REF: A. JEDDAH 00401 B. THE HAGUE 00133 C. COPENHAGEN
00072

JEDDAH 00000084 001.6 OF 002
Classified By: Consul General Tatiana C. Gfoeller for Reasons 1.4(b) and (d)

¶1. (C) BEGIN SUMMARY AND COMMENT: Since the OIC's 2004 election of Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu as Secretary General, one of his top priorities has been to combat misperceptions of Islam. Unsurprisingly, he issued a strong statement condemning the February 13 re-publishing of caricatures from the 2006 Mohammad cartoon crisis (Reftels A and C). Ihsanoglu deemed the Danish media decision to publish the cartoons "irresponsible" and "insensible," arguing that the cartoons "constituted an advocacy of hatred." He further warned of "bigger conflict" over the cartoons and called on Muslims to protest peacefully. Of comparable offense, OIC officials argued recently to Pol Chief, is the upcoming release of a Dutch MP's film on Islam (Reftel B). Given the OIC's focus on "Islamophobia" and recent protest of the caricatures, the film will undoubtedly roil the OIC, prompting Ihsanoglu to issue equally strong remarks. Conversations with Post contacts and letters to Saudi English-language dailies have presented a myriad of Saudi opinions, from defense of Freedom of Speech to outright anger

toward the Danish media. END SUMMARY AND COMMENT.

OIC CAMPAIGNS AGAINST "ISLAMOPHOBIA"

¶2. (U) In speeches around the World, Organization of the Islamic Conference Secretary General Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu and other OIC officials have been campaigning against "Islamophobia;" a term Ihsanoglu has described as "intolerance of and discrimination against Muslims." Ihsanoglu believes that post-9/11 the Western media has contributed to a rise in "misrepresentations and stereotyping of Islam." He argues that actions such as the publishing of the 2006 Mohammad cartoons are "islamophobic" and do nothing more than foster hostility toward Muslims.

OIC SYG WARNS OF BIGGER CONFLICT; CALLS FOR PEACEFUL PROTEST

¶3. (U) Ihsanoglu stated on February 16 that the Danish media decision to re-publish the caricatures was "irresponsible" and "insensible," and "constituted an advocacy of hatred." He warned that by reprinting the cartoons, "we are headed toward a bigger conflict and that shows that both sides will be hostages of their radicals." Condemning the use of violence, he called on Muslims in Denmark to protest "peacefully and democratically." He added that the "Muslim world was waiting for an unequivocal stand" from the Danish government under the 1996 United Nations International Covenant of Civil and Political Rights.

OIC CONCERNED ABOUT DUTCH FILM ON ISLAM

¶4. (C) Citing the epidemic nature of "Islamophobia," OIC officials raised with Pol Chief their concern over Dutch MP Geert Wilder's soon-to-be released, 15-minute film on Islam (Reftel B). (NOTE: In a February 10 interview, Wilders said the film would be released in March. END NOTE.) They compared it to the 2006 Danish cartoons scandal and stated that such actions did nothing but slander Islam and Muslims. (COMMENT: In previous meetings, Post has asked OIC officials how such a claim does not infringe Freedom of Speech. Their response is typically ambiguous, stating that they support Freedom of Speech provided that people exercise that right with respect for other cultures. END COMMENT). They also expressed concern over a perceived increase in the negative perception of Islam in the West. They added that they believed the solution was for dialogue across civilizations.

SAUDI OPINION RUNS THE GAMUT

¶5. (C) Conversations with Post contacts and letters published in Saudi English-language dailies over the past few days have presented an array of Saudi opinions regarding the re-publishing of the cartoons. A few liberal, U.S.-educated Jeddawis believe that creating such caricatures is within the purview of Freedom of Speech. More moderate individuals, such as some of Post's OIC contacts, argue that Freedom of Speech should not include the right to propagate negative opinions about other cultures. Others have deemed such

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cartoons "an insult to Islam," and consider their re-publishing a blatant attack on Muslims worldwide.

GFOELLER ",